

EXISTENTIALIST SUBJECT IN ALBERT CAMUS 'S PHILOSOPHY

O SUJEITO EXISTENCIALISTA NA FILOSOFIA DE ALBERT CAMUS

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Abstract: Albert Camus was the last typical philosopher of the 20th century existentialist movement. The central theme in Camus's existentialism is to delve into the human inner life through two categories: absurdity and rebellion. By examining these two interconnected tenets, Camus discusses modern individual's aspirations for freedom, self-expression, and breaking away from societal norms. The way to genuine existence, for Camus, is to rebel, that means to be against the absurd, to assert one's personal identity and value within society. This paper focuses on analyzing the existentialist subject on dual aspects: becoming aware of life's absurdity and rebellion against the absurd.

Keywords: Albert Camus. Existentialism. Absurdity's awareness. Rebellion.

Resumo: Albert Camus foi o último filósofo típico do movimento existencialista do século XX. O tema central do existencialismo de Camus é aprofundar a vida interior humana através de duas categorias: absurdo e rebelião. Ao examinar esses dois princípios interligados, Camus discute as aspirações do indivíduo moderno por liberdade, autoexpressão e ruptura com as normas sociais. Para Camus, o caminho para a existência genuína é rebelar-se, ou seja, ser contra o absurdo, afirmar a identidade pessoal e o valor dentro da sociedade. Este artigo se concentra na análise do sujeito existencialista em dois aspectos: a consciência do absurdo da vida e a rebelião contra o absurdo.

Palavras-chave: Albert Camus. Existencialismo. Consciência do absurdo. Rebelião.

Introduction

A significant aspect of Albert Camus' existentialist philosophy is his continuous demonstration of the absurdity of existence, emphasizing the necessity of acknowledging the absurd in order to survive and of resolving it to discover one's own authentic existence. Camus' existentialism originated from socio-economic conditions, theoretical premises, and his own melancholic life experiences. During the 20th century, the development of science and technology radically transformed the productive forces of society, liberating humans from manual labor. On the one hand, life improved with more diverse products as a result, and people's living standards were improved. However, on the other hand, industrial development also brought about the anxiety and crises within capitalist societies of that time. As human beings became more dependent, indifferent, and insignificant within the technological system of society, they become "a material force" (Colette, 1968, as cited in Nguyen. T. D, 2006); in other words, man have lost their personality. This is the situation described as "deadlocking of human beings into society with no escape" (op.cit, Nguyen.T.D, 2006, p. 7), to some extent, related to A. Toffler's *The Third wave*. Existentialism emerged from such historical conditions and circumstances. Camus inherited Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence and the phenomenology of Husserl to construct his own existentialist theory.

Reflecting on life values, Camus discovered the existing absurdities; thereby, he pointed out the limitation of reason and called for the action of creating one's own values for his or her life. The whole of his existentialist philosophy claims a perspective of rejecting suicide, or refusing of taking refuge into religion or any illusory belief. Rather, it affirms that human beings can fully live a meaningful, intimate life with the experience of the absurd. Characters in his work acknowledged the absurdity, resisted it by turning away, being indifferent to life, expressing a rebellious attitude. Freedom, rebellion, and passion are the consequences of our being's awareness and accepting the absurd. In Camus, this perspective of rebellion was appointed to a fundamental aspect of human existence. Rebellion take a positive sense when it brings people to freedom.

To clarify the question of the existentialist subject in Albert Camus' philosophy, and also to suggest comments on positive values and limitations of Camus' existentialism, this paper uses specific methodologies in historical research, including analysis, juxtaposition, and synthesis that grounded on the principle of the unity between philosophy and its history.

Literature Review

The overarching concept in Camus' entire philosophy is the perspective of the absurd and rebellious human being (Solomon, 2006, p. 40). For Bui (2023), Camus was aware of the absurdity of humanity today is rapidly increasing, "simply because humans are quite benevolent and overly preoccupied with sensual indulgence". Bui noted that Camus committed his characters,

...a mission to popularize philosophy. The human condition was explored by him [Camus] in more depth than ever before; he used philosophy to address the human soul in the post-war period as they had not yet emerged from the catastrophe of war. We must acknowledge in Albert Camus, as with his contemporaries, the use of literature to deliver philosophical ideas: the human condition in the face of the absurd, the matter of suicide, of rebellion. (Bui, 2023, pp. 6-19)

Sprintzen et al. (2004) emphasize that Camus' generation did not reject all moral, religious, political, and social values. Rather, they were intolerant of the Europe of their time. As Camus stated, the evil intellectuals of that Europe bore the names of philosophers such as Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, to name but a few. "We are living in their Europe," he argued.

Although indignant with the times, Camus himself went into a dead end: On the one hand, he said that life is meaningless and people are allowed to do anything; on the other hand, he said that people should not harm others, should pity others, thus restraining their freedom. But in whose name should we pity people when people themselves have no meaning? Although Camus' indignation was a dead end, Camus, like Sartre, nevertheless awakened humanity to a fundamental problem, forcing them to break away from their superficial, carefree, day-to-day lives, forcing themselves to find a reason for living before deciding on an attitude towards life (Sprintzen et al., 2004, p. 92).

In another line, Bloom (2009, p. 83) argued that Camus had expressed the anxiety and fear of the human condition in the face of so many upheavals and disasters in the first half of the 20th century in the West. He did not discuss complex metaphysical issues such as reality and nothingness, existence and essence, etc... but only spoke about the meaning of existence and the human condition. Foley also spoke of the moderate, compromising humanistic thought permeating Camus' works. When this thought encounters the aporetic real life with so many paradoxes, it certainly will not have a positive effect on the growing generations of Camus's time (Foley, 2008, p. 132).

Existentialist philosophy reflects the common sentiment of the era: a sense of decline, meaninglessness, and the dead-end nature of everything related to humans (Dinh et al., 2019, p. 108). Nguyen examines the existential issue from the perspective that humans always have to live in a state of anxiety, horror, and loneliness, like abandoned beings, always having to endure many contradictions in life, thus making life absurd and 'nauseating' (Nguyen, 2022, p. 34). As an existentialist, Camus focused on human existence, the absurdity of life, along with the human struggle against that absurdity. Igbafe has considered this a characteristic of Camus' existential philosophy (Igbafe, 2009). Igbafe's contribution was to examine the practical utility of Albert Camus' existential philosophy, especially in the context of contemporary efforts to improve the living conditions and existence of people in Africa (Igbafe, 2009). This absurdity has been examined from many different perspectives by many authors. Alberes remarked that Camus has described a disoriented human in a world that is hardly made for humans. He wanted to overthrow the ancient and sacred illusions that had wrongly asserted that life is satisfying according to people's desires about life. 'The Stranger' is the adventure of a person who feels that humans cannot compromise with life, that there is a misunderstanding between humans and life (Alberes, 2021, p. 329). Life is no longer coherent or clear; life obeys an absurd, fragmented force, and human reason cannot comprehend this disorder that lies outside all laws. Speaking of this absurdity, Robbe asserts that the absurd is the insurmountable abyss existing between humans and the world, between the desires of the human spirit and the world's inability to satisfy them. The absurd is not in humans, nor in things, but in the impossibility of establishing any relationship other than strangeness (Robbe, 2019, p. 94-5). He emphasizes that the absurd always entails disappointment, retreat, rebellion and it is precisely the form of tragic humanism (Robbe, 2020, p. 95-6). Humanism is seen by Kaluza and Francev in the values that Camus attributed to human rebellion and resistance against the absurd (Kaluza and Francev, 2020, 127).

A comprehensive, multi-dimensional overview of the research works on Camus' existential philosophy involves outlining Camus' thought: the starting point of Camus' theory is the absurd. The absurd describes the relationship between humans and society. Rebellion is the most notable aspect of Camus' existentialism. And, we may see that, fundamentally, Camus' sense of rebellion is metaphysical and non-principle (Carroll, 2007, p. 94). However, Do (2018) has acknowledged the positive contributions in Camus' work, "it stands on the opposite side of fascism, it disagrees with injustice and crime, with unjust

wars, with savage terrorism" (Do, 2018, p. 119). It is remarked that, Camus opposes the unjust violence that he calls irrational history, but at the same time he also rejects the righteous violence that he calls rational history; and he evaluates the two equally; Camus' serious mistake lies there. He seeks a moderate path, which often means compromising with the enemies of humanity (Do, 2018, p. 120). Camus delved deep into "the nakedness of man against the absurd". The absurd is the zero of commitment. The truth in "The Stranger" as well as in "The Myth of Sisyphus" is a negative truth, a necessary beginning for positive commitment (Zaretsky, 2020). Although life is absurd, ridiculous, and meaningless, it does not mean that it is not worth living, but rather provokes a call to overcome it by giving it meaning (Arinze & Onwuatuegwu, 2020). This article focuses on clarifying two aspects of human existence in Camus' existential philosophy: the sense of the absurd and the rebellion against the absurd. The contribution of the article is to examine the absurd as well as human resistance against that absurdity on a philosophical level. More importantly, the article has opened a discussion about the values and limitations in order to be able to evaluate Camus' existential philosophy comprehensively and objectively.

1. Being aware of the absurd

It is a feature of existentialism that its ideas are often not formulated in a systematic way as other philosophies, but rather through literary works, essays, and plays... Albert Camus' ideas of awareness of the absurd are also expressed through literary works, such as *The Stranger*, *The Plague*, *The Rebel*, not to mention several plays as *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Misunderstanding*, *Caligula*... To capture the existential man, Camus interpreted it through the awareness of the absurd which makes his readers being shocked, horrified, and even causes controversy. He said, "I do not know whether or not this world has a meaning which transcends it. But I am aware that I do not know this meaning and that at the moment it is impossible for me to know it" (Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, translated by O'Brien, 1955 p.51). In *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, Camus affirms: "The theme of this work is precisely the relationship between the absurd and suicide, the extent to which suicide is a solution to the absurd" (Camus, op.cit, p. 6). He explained, it is the absurdity that human beings always desire to grasp laws of the world, yearn for happiness, but these things are obviously not readily available in the world. Thus, the absurd, for Camus also does not reside in the meaningless universe. By itself the world is not absurd; it is neither rational nor

irrational, it is simply unreasonable. The absurd is not the quality of man alone. The absurd arises when man confronts the irrational with all his nostalgic longing for happiness and reasonable unity. “The absurd is born of that confrontation of the human appeal and the unreasonable silence of the world” (Camus, op.cit, p.32). Absurdity only appears in the relationship between rational men, put to face with questions about the absurd world. If he has no ambition for being uniqueness, whether the cosmos is quiet or not is not absurd at all; and in the same way, if the world could reponse to that call, man would not aware that life is absurd.

In the context of the modern world’s crisis in 20th century, the economic and technological impact, as well as the fierce competition between nation-states, has led to environmental and human rights issues being downgraded and neglected. Thus humanistic existentialism has taken the absurd to counter the rationalism. Kierkegaard argued that he himself was not ‘a moment of logic’ in the system of rationalists. Similarly, Nietzsche also argued that human beings should not seek for the world of ideas, but instead return to the body, to the wisdom of their body. He considered the body as a great intellect, hence, all human actions are often originated from the somatic instincts. For Nietzsche, everything good is instinct. So is its kindness. There is no more perfect act than instinct... Many existentialists adhere Nietzsche's perspective on instincts to introduce the idea of absurdity, opposing against rationalism and immoralism. Camus himself also saw that the absurd is both an existential condition and one’s illuminated consciousness of those conditions. He commented: “This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For the moment it is all that links them together. It binds them one to the other as only hatred can weld two creatures together. This is all I can discern clearly in this measureless universe where my adventure takes place.” (Camus, op. cit, p.26). Rationalist views and norms have made people feeling alienated from the world, because the principles and norms of the world have limited humans, constrained their humanity to the service for society. Thus, Camus pushed rationality go beyond its limits to become the cause of the absurdity of human condition, and therefore he claimed to reject the rationalism that created absolute principles as a means of understanding the world. Men hoped to bring rationality back to its place. Jacques Colette argues that Camus elaborated an eclectic conception between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, because Camus also emphasized humans’ responsibility, but did not appeal to God as in

Kierkegaard, nor to declare that God is dead as in Nietzsche (Colette, 1968, as cited in Nguyen.T. D, 2006, p. 83).

Camus' ideas of the absurd are expressed in many of his literary works. In *The Stranger*, he created the protagonist of Meursault, a man who is considered to be alienated from himself. Meursault is a man who, when learned of the death of his mother, rather than grieving and being distressed, only cares about the exact information of the telegram about his mother's death, with an indifferent attitude. In the novel, Meursault informed: "Mother died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know." (Camus, *The Stranger*, 1989, p.3). He is a man who, while is in a seaside with his girlfriend, commits a murder 'without a cause', or unknowing the very reason why he "pulled the trigger". Even when sentenced to death, he hopes there will be a large, hateful crowd at his execution so as not to feel alone. Through these actions, Meursault is no longer within the normal moral norms of society. Camus presents three stages in which Meursault encounters the absurd situation, that is to say, the meaninglessness of human life, including the indifference or detachment, confrontation with absurdity, acceptance and rebellion. He called Meursault the absurd man.

In another work *The Plague*, Camus presented the absurd in a different view. It is when the peaceful city of Oran had suddenly been struck by the plague that life turned upside down, and the citizens were confronted with quarantine and death. The situation is:

On the day following old Michel's death, the sky clouded up and there were brief torrential downpours, each of which was followed by some hours of muggy heat. The aspect of the sea, too, changed; its dark-blue translucency had gone and, under the lowering sky, it had steely or silvery glints that hurt the eyes to look at. ... a mood of listlessness descended. (Camus, *The Plague*, 1967, translated by Stuart Gilbert. Hutchinson, p.48)

The narration continues:

Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world; yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise.

In fact, like our fellow citizens, Rieux was caught off his guard, and we should understand his hesitations in the light of this fact; and similarly understand how he was torn between conflicting fears and confidence. When a war breaks out, people say: "It's too stupid; it can't last long." But though a war may well be "too stupid," that doesn't prevent its lasting. Stupidity has a knack of getting its way; as we should see if we were not always so much wrapped up in ourselves.

In this respect our townfolk were like everybody else, wrapped up in themselves; in other words they were humanists: they disbelieved in pestilences.

A pestilence isn't a thing made to man's measure; therefore we tell ourselves that pestilence is a mere bogey of the mind, a bad dream that will pass away. But it doesn't always pass away and, from one bad dream to another, it is men who pass away, and the humanists first of all, because they haven't taken their precautions.

... They fancied themselves free, and no one will ever be free so long as there are pestilences. (Camus, op.cit, pp. 55-56).

Although the plague is seen as an evil, and what is evil is absurd, so it should not have happened to humans, but *c'est la vie*, when good and evil always go hand in hand, it is followed that the human fate becomes insignificant and vulnerable in the face of the ebb and flow of life. All the protagonists in Camus' novels or plays seem to have one thing in common: they have a rich and complicated inner life, and they are lonely and feel alienated in their own world. This is also the most noticeable characteristic of the existential subjectivity. Advocating this view, Quynh Nguyen Thi and Trang Do argue that, in the state of survival, human beings always have to face loneliness and accept loneliness, being tormented to achieve spiritual freedom. In the same light, Dostoevsky's protagonists also accept loneliness and suffering, just as Camus' characters that acknowledge the absurdity of life as the truth of life, becoming a typical symbols of existentialism.

In promoting his ideas about the absurd, Camus also points out the relationship between the absurd and suicide. Suicide as a way of life is different from suicide as a social phenomenon. In exploring the relationship between the absurd and suicide, Camus argues that when people no longer find meaning in their life, they often think of suicide, but when they are close to death, they again paradoxically crave life. As in case of Meursault, when faced with the death penalty, he yearns to live, to escape death. Camus noted: "The contrary of suicide, in fact, is the man condemned to death" (Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 2005, p.125). Humans have a inclination to commit suicide while still being able to live; when are forced to face death, they still have a passion for life even as death rushes towards them.

When realizing that death is an inevitable result of the life's absurdity, Camus argues, suicide is also our acceptance of the absurd death. He suggests, "its way, suicide settles the absurd. It engulfs the absurd in the same death. But I know that in order to keep alive, the absurd cannot be settled. It escapes suicide to the extent that it is simultaneously awareness and rejection of death. It is, at the extreme limit of the condemned man's last thought, that

shoelace that despite everything he sees a few yards away, on the very brink of his dizzying fall.” (Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 1955, p. 152). However, in the face of the question of suicide, people rather deny the logic of suicide, they want to rebel to resist the tragic life, and “rebellion” is the second aspect of Camus' existentialist thought.

Camus argued for the need to confront consequences of the absurd, and aims to take this as a starting point to develop his ideas in a logical way. Instead of running away from the feeling of absurdity, whether through suicide or hope, he tried to emphasize that we can live through with this feeling of absurdity. By raising suicide as a philosophical problem, Camus was actually tracing to the root of the problem of life's meaning, or the existence of a value system. “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest, whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories, Come afterwards, whether the earth or the Sun revolve around the other is a matter of profound indifference. To tell the truth, it is a futile question. I have never seen anyone die for the ontological argument... on the other hand, I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I therefore conclude 1 that the meaning of life is the most urgent question. (Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 1955, p. 11)

As we have seen, existentialism in a cultural context saw the dominance of values, of absolute norms over the individuals who are active and being unique. Through his examination on the logic of suicide, Camus was indeed re-examining the self as a human existence - always enquiring the meaning of life. Examining the values in life, Camus saw that, on the one hand, man is a free existential being with his own unique feelings with own values, and on the other hand, man is trapped in given rules that are imposed on him without any reflection. Reconciling these two aspects is one of the major themes of philosophy and religion.

Camus did not intend to construct his philosophy as a doctrine of existence, nor did he explain the common concepts found in existentialist philosophy: loneliness, anxiety, nothingness, etc. On the contrary, his thought does not deviate from the stream of existentialist philosophy. We recognize original path to enter into existence following to the spirit of existentialism - human existence is the ground of this philosophy.

2. Rebellion against absurdity

Facing the immense challenges and chaos of life, human beings often find themselves questioning the purpose of their existence. This realization of their tragic condition compels them to adopt specific behaviors in response to these circumstances. Camus characterizes these responses as “rebellion”. He noted, “We live in an unsacrosanct moment in history. Insurrection is certainly not the sum total of human experience. But history today, with all its storm and strife, compels us to say that rebellion is one of the essential dimensions of man. It is our historic reality. Unless we choose to ignore reality, we must find our values in it.” (Camus, *The Rebel*, 1968, p. 52).

The characters in Camus's works embody various shapes of sorrow, and their worlds are filled with irreconcilable contradictions, which are the very roots of absurdity. The rebellious attitude against absurdity serves as a testament to its existence. Rebellion also becomes a means of reclaiming individual values that have been lost amidst the rigid norms of society. When rebellion and resistance arise, it signifies the presence of values that demand affirmation. Camus asserts, “Not every value entails rebellion, but every act of rebellion tacitly invokes a value.” (Camus, *The Rebel*, 1951, p. 14).

Camus thought that, social norms act as invisible frameworks shaping all of our action. They are as ghosts behind our reason, a persistent doubt over the purpose of our existence. Is such a life worth living, if we are confined within the narrow frame of these norms, without awareness of the reason or final cause of our lives? Camus presents two options: hope or suicide. Suicide implies that life is not worth living. Hope, on the other hand, implies rejection of the view that life is meaningless, by living on the means of blind faith. Camus asserts that humanity must rise above these limitations, and, “Living an experience, a particular fate, is accepting it fully. Now, no one will live this fate, knowing it to be absurd, unless he does everything to keep before him that absurd brought to light by consciousness. Negating one of the terms of the opposition on which he lives amounts to escaping it.” (Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 2005, p. 52).

Reason encompasses humans' perception of the world, and the result of this is often principles and norms. However, reason itself has its limits, and is not absolute. In the meantime, each individual has their own values, so there is no absolute freedom or absolute fairness for everyone, then the absurdity. For Camus, there is a clash between freedom and justice only when they are considered in absolute terms, which is just what rebellion will not do: Rebellion “can only promise an assured dignity coupled with relative justice. It supposes

a borderline at which the community of man is established. Its universe is the universe of relative values.” (Albert Camus, *L’Homme révolté*, Paris 1951. Dt.: Albert Camus, *Der Mensch in der Revolte*. Essays, Reinbek 1969 (zuerst 1953), p. 235). In addition, for Camus, when man realize the absurdity, they rebel in affirming their rights. No matter how chaotic and vague it may be, from the rebellious spirit, a rebel’s disposition occurs: a sudden, overwhelming awareness of something in the human condition, which human beings themselves can identify with, even if only for a moment, or at some point. It is an identification that never felt or truly experienced from before. As we may know, Camus explains that a rebel, who usually only knows how to obey orders, to “say yes”, then suddenly one day they don’t take commands anymore. It is the moment when man know how to say “No.” The words “yes” and “no” simultaneously confirm immediately a borderline. This means that human beings could accept the norms and principles of society to a certain extent. But if those norms and principles make them lose their dignity and exceed their own borderlines of acceptance, they would resist and rebel to demand respect. They may even take suffering as long as they are respected. Respect here means a respect for the vital part of the human being, which is sacred and cannot be withdrawn into an abstract concept. Rebellion, once again, affirms that human existence is an existence that knows the value of oneself and fights to protect that value.

Inquiring into the history of rebellious movements, Camus observed that a rebellion often generates immense impulses, capable of disrupting lives, and even consuming the very principles upon which it relies on, to struggle the situation. However, he maintained that the purpose of rebellion is supposed to transform rather than destroy what is prevalent. As a means to fight for human dignity, rebellion embodies the power of life, not of death. Its fundamental logic is not of destruction but of creation. Therefore, if the rebels lose vision of the underlying cause for their rebellion, the rebellion itself loses its meaning. Camus emphasized the importance of enlightened awareness and the awakening of the relevant values of the present, akin to a primal morality. Through rebellion, individuals find their existence, simultaneously becoming rebels for all. He asserted, “In order to exist, man must rebel, but rebellion must respect the limit it discovers in itself—a limit where minds meet and, in meeting, begin to exist.” (Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, 1968, p. 63).

In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus employs the symbol of Sisyphus, condemned by the gods to perpetually roll a boulder up a hill only to have it roll back down upon reaching the summit, as a metaphor for the individual's relentless struggle against life's absurdities. If

Sisyphus cannot commit suicide to end this torment, the only alternative is to rebel by embracing the act of rolling the boulder uphill with joy. Camus further argues that by accepting the struggle against failure with a sense of joy, the individual gains meaning and identity. This implies that Camus rejects the notion that once man accepts the world's absurdity, suicide seems to be a rational choice. Instead, he contends that if absurdity is an inherent and unresolved conflict, then the pursuit of a more fulfilling and meaningful life should be the focus. While both suicide and hope offer paths to escape absurdity, Camus asserts that, "It was previously a question of finding out whether or not life had to have a meaning to be lived. It now becomes clear, on the contrary, that it will be lived all the better if it has no meaning. Living an experience, a particular fate, is accepting it fully." (Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 2005, p. 51).

In Albert Camus' novel "The Stranger," Meursault, for example, yearns to live a free life, seeking personal freedom in each and every moment, rejecting societal impositions and norms, and denying to be subjected to community. Meursault's desire for individual freedom manifests in his actions, such as smoking and behaving recklessly during his mother's funeral, or going to the beach and engaging in intimacies the day after. These acts represent his resistance against the irrational imposition of social values upon his personal life. Camus argues that when individuals are arbitrarily assigned values that not suit them, they experience an internal conflict. This conflict gives rise to a spirit of rebellion, a collective consciousness that seeks to reaffirm the human spirit in the face of adversity. Camus asserts that "When he rebels, a man identifies himself with other men and so surpasses himself, and from this point of view human solidarity is metaphysical. But for the moment we are only talking of the kind of solidarity that is born in chains." (Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, 1956, p. 97). Rebellion is for human beings as such in society, thus is the rebellious spirit of social human beings. Therefore, if rebellion denies this solidarity, it is not considered a rebellious spirit. Human solidarity is based on rebellion, and rebellion in turn can only find its justification in this solidarity.

In his existentialism, Camus proposes that the spirit of rebellion, as an unique thought, is an answer to the life's absurdity, providing individuals with a means to assert their existence and create meaning amidst an indifferent cosmos. In the face of the ups and downs of social life, the principles and norms that require people to follow make individual people lose their own identity. Camus emphasizes that the goal of rebellion is not destruction but creation—the creation of a world that is more aligned with human values and aspirations.

While Camus highlights the importance of rebellion, it seems that its boundaries, objectives, and duties require further exploration and clarification.

3. Discussion

Of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the Enlightenment was *the continuous light* that ended *the dark nights* of the Middle Ages. This was a period in which all progress was judged by the achievement of science and technology. For centuries, the individuals had been pushed into the background by systems of thought that did not concern the uniqueness of every and each individual, and that despised the aspiration for life of individuals. For such social realities, the emergence of existentialism do awake people, claiming for human freedom. Human beings have individual freedom and their own unique identities; these things should not be limited by common rules of society. Camus' existentialist philosophy embodies the spirit of rebellion against the ideas and institutions of society, which have suppressed individual freedom and turned individuals into those who deny responsibilities, particularly their own responsibility in the first place. Camus' existentialist philosophy has also found an option out: rebellion is not to destroy existing values, but to relativize values and at the same time to appreciate the freedom to choose respectfully one's own values. From studying Camus' existentialist philosophy, we can draw the following values and limitations:

- Values from Camus's existentialism

Firstly, The concept of the absurd has made a theoretical contribution to existentialist philosophy in particular, as well as to the theories of humanism as a kind of irrationalism in particular. According to notion of the absurd, rationality cannot be the absolute measure of human existence, or in other words, rationality cannot be the only possibility of human nature, and human existence cannot rely solely on the world's response to human desires. Existentialists cannot accept values imposed on them, but they themselves must find the meaning of their own lives, rather than assigned values. From now on, people are free to create meaning for their own lives without being subjected to any imposition other than responsibility for their own free actions. The notion of the absurd in Camus' existentialist thought has evoked thoughts about human identity, and on human aspiration to self-determination. The absurd is both the *existential condition of man* and *the awareness of that condition*. Through the tragic fate of the protagonists in his works, Camus hoped to awaken that man

cannot just wait for the world's response, but must strive themselves to the journey of life, finding meaning of their own lives with an optimistic and active attitude. The message from the existentialist subject in Camus' philosophy is that the more meaningless life is, the more life worth living. That is the most profound existentialist meaning of Camus's contribution.

Secondly, regarding the notion of rebellion against the absurd, Camus also warned about the danger of falling into nihilism and immorality in society, when rebellion does not ensure rebellion's logic that is creative rather than destructive. Camus' concept of rebellion is expressed through positive characters rather than destructive rebellion, mainly directing people to a positive lifestyle, knowing how to rebel, fighting to affirm their existence, to seek happiness and the meaning of life. To this day, even though human life is still full of injustice and suffering, these views of Camus still retain their value. When human life is still affected by wars for profit, for values, for faith... then rebelling towards a happy life is truly a humanistic thought. At the same time, the rebellious thought in relation to solidarity is also a progressive thought. Camus wrote: "Ultimately, we need to address the meaning, the purpose of human existence on Earth and in the cosmos, and on the mission that man need to fulfill by their nature. At the same time, global humanism also needs to be aware of the human survival as the issue that governs others" (cited from Do Minh Hop, 2006, p. 356). While rebelling for their own personal interests, people should not forget the interests of others, for the good values of the community. Thus, rebellion becomes a fundamental element in Camus' existentialist thought, the development of the rebellious thought increasingly carries more positive meaning, which is also the most reasonable attitude to live in an absurd world.

- Limitations of Camus's existentialism

Firstly, Camus' notion of the absurd is also subjective and contains the danger of being absolutized, leading to an overestimation or, in other words, an absolutization of the role of personal awareness and personality while underestimating rationality. This is even more dangerous than absolutizing the role of rationality, because if society only places absolute individual freedom above all else and underestimates social values and norms, then that is dangerous for that society. Camus's views are the basis for irrationalism when talking about subjectivity. Human existence cannot expect the world to respond to its desires, from now on, people are free to create meaning for their own lives without being subjected to any imposition other than responsibility for their own free actions.

Secondly, Camus' notion of rebellion is presented in a very appealing way through different characters. This concept is also one of Camus' valuable ideas. However, in his reflections on rebellion, he has not yet given a positive programme for rebellion. Rebellion, for Camus, is considered to be an aspect of human existence, of which human beings are between rejection and acceptance. People should therefore live fully with their present life, in every moment with all their feelings and passions. However, Camus has not yet given a way through which people can participate in the transformation of the times while still keeping their “hands in clean.”

Conclusion

Existentialism, which emerged and was presented in many different forms, has constantly pointed its attack on rationalism. However, the purpose of existentialism is not to find a future paradigm for human society, but to find the lost, forgotten human individual, to return to humanistic values: freedom, justice, love, sense of duty, understanding and empathy. Along with the flow of existentialism, through his literary works, plays and essays, Camus has put forward concepts such as the absurd, rebellion against the absurd. Through his existentialist philosophy, Camus affirmed that it is the rebellion, passion, and freedom that helps people escape the absurd. Camus pointed out the absurd nature of human beings as they cannot find the meaning and purpose of his life, and that makes man suffer. With the spirit of rebellion, Camus' existentialist philosophy can completely come into life as a personal drive forcing individual to meditate on freedom and to actualize their freedom.

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